



**TESTIMONY OF THE CONNECTICUT JUVENILE JUSTICE ALLIANCE
FOR THE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN
FEBRUARY 18, 2014
REGARDING H.B. 5040**

**IN FAVOR OF: Section 1(g) 25 of HB 5040 AN ACT CONCERNING THE
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES AND THE PROTECTION OF
CHILDREN**

Sen. Bartolomeo, Rep. Urban and members of the Committee on Children, thank you for this opportunity to speak with you. I'm Abby Anderson, executive director of the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance, a statewide advocacy organization dedicated to stopping the criminalization of Connecticut's children. We support evidence-based prevention to keep children from entering the system as well as services to help kids who do enter the system to be successful.

The Alliance supports section 1 (g) 25 of HB 5040, which calls for information sharing between the Department of Children and Families and the Court Support Services Division for the purposes of DCF measuring recidivism among juvenile offenders.

Now, DCF does not track recidivism. Recidivism rates tell us how often offenders return to the justice system and therefore tell us if programs are working, if services are effective – in RBA language, “is anyone better off?” Today DCF can't answer that question. And so it cannot measure the cost effectiveness of a program or pinpoint which children will most benefit from its services.

The state's own studies show that children of color experience harsher treatment in the juvenile justice system than their white peers. Recidivism data is used to “norm” risk assessment tools and evaluate programs, services and the system as a whole. So, regular recidivism data helps pinpoint strengths, weaknesses and areas where racial bias is affecting decision-making.

Tracking recidivism is essential to improving the services offered by the juvenile justice system and ensuring that it uses resources wisely.

Thank you for your time and attention. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Alliance member organizations:

AFCAMP, Center for Children's Advocacy, Center for Effective Practice, CHDI, Connecticut Legal Services, Connecticut Voices for Children, Connecticut Youth Services Association, Community Partners in Action, FAVOR, FSW, NAMI Connecticut and the Keep the Promise Coalition, Office of the Chief Public Defender, Office of the Child Advocate, RYASAP, The Tow Foundation, The Village for Families and Children